

***Defense Authorization Bill Strengthens Military***

Washington, D.C.—Today, Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) voted to strengthen our national security, provide the military with the tools it needs, and make good on our country's promise to take care of our servicemen and women and their families. The National Defense Authorization Act prepares our Armed Forces for the 21st century by strengthening our military readiness and counterterrorism efforts, while protecting and supporting our troops and their families.

"It is fitting that we pass this important bill as we head into Memorial Day weekend," Wilson said. "As a nation, our resolve must be to build a future worthy of our heroes' sacrifices. That begins with taking care of those who have defended our country. We must put our veterans and our troops first. Politics and partisanship should never be a factor in our support of American veterans or troops. I am proud that Congress has been delivering on that promise."

This bill continues Democrats' work to defeat al Qaeda and its extremist allies. It fully supports the President's strategy to strengthen strategic partnerships. It also places a strong emphasis on halting the recruitment and fundraising tools being used by terrorists. The bill makes historic investments in nonproliferation programs to keep vulnerable nuclear materials and weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of our enemies.

In addition, this bill authorizes the investment of billions of dollars to ensure the U.S. military has the equipment and armor it needs on the battlefield. It will help U.S. commanders cut through red tape and get the equipment they need when they need it.

"Our military men and women are among our most precious resources. Today they are performing admirably and with courage in Iraq and Afghanistan. They must have the proper equipment to do the job we've asked them to do," Wilson said.

The bill also provides U.S. troops a 1.9% pay raise, 0.5% greater than the President's budget request. It extends TRICARE, the health coverage plan for military families, to dependent children up to age 26 and increases the family separation allowance for our troops whose deployment requires them to live away from their families.

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